



TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF METAPHORS IN POLITICAL TEXTS – A CASE STUDY OF THE REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE GOVERNMENT 2020

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Abstract:

As a cognitive phenomenon, metaphor is frequently used in political texts, which have been gradually standardized and characterized in China in recent years. Appropriate metaphors can better convey political information and express political stance. Therefore, the accurate translation of metaphor is of great importance. It can not only help to improve the effect of publicity, but also contribute to the construction of national discourse. Based on the bilingual version of the Report on the Work of the Government 2020 (RWG), this study discusses the translation strategies of metaphors in political texts, so as to provide references for the translation of political texts, thereby improving the publicity efficiency and promoting the construction of national discourse.

Keywords: metaphor; political texts; *Report on the Work of the Government 2020*; translation strategies

1. Introduction

In traditional rhetoric, metaphor and simile are regarded as two parallel rhetorical methods. Shu Dingfang (2003) makes a difference between metaphor and simile, believing that their difference mainly lies in whether there are words such as "like" in the language structure. According to Collins Dictionary, a metaphor is an imaginative way of describing something by referring to something else which is the same in a particular way. For example, if you want to say that someone is very shy and frightened of things, you might say that he is a mouse. As for the definitions of metaphor, different scholars have different views. Shu (2003) believes metaphor is essentially a phenomenon of word substitution, which is based on the similarity or analogy between two things. Wei Zaijiang (2006) thinks that metaphor is a structural mapping from one domain to another. Earlier than these Chinese scholars, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) posit that

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metaphor is an indispensable cognitive mechanism of human. As a cognitive phenomenon, metaphor is an important component of language widely used in our daily life. Metaphors are everywhere. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) state in *Metaphors We Live By*, "metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action." Richards (1996) says that metaphor is used in one out of every three sentences in daily conversation. Newmark (1981: 85) points out that three quarters of English consists of used metaphors. That is to say, metaphors are very common in our daily life, or where there is language, there is metaphor. Metaphor is an effective cognitive means widely used in various fields, including politics, science and technology, culture, society and economy. Language and politics are highly integrated, so metaphor is also frequently used in political texts. In social activities, metaphor has a natural connection with politics. He Mengyi (2011) says that politics is everywhere, and human cannot exist without politics. In fact, the important role of metaphor in politics is best demonstrated that cultural identity-building is conceptualized as a metaphoric process and illustrates how the metaphoric perspective reveals specific cognitive, emotional and political aspects of cultural identity-building (Vaara, Tienari and Sääntti, 2003: 419).

2. Literature Review

In China, Liu Ningsheng first introduced the "metaphorical concept" by translating relevant chapters of Lakoff & Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*, then discussions about metaphor started. With a series of papers, Shu Dingfang explicates the objectives and methods (1996), functions (2000), research topics (2002) of metaphors, and the differences between metaphor and simile (2003). Xiao Kunxue (2005) reveals the cognitive nature and orientation of metaphors. Wei Zaijiang (2006) expounds the textual functions of metaphor from the perspective of functional linguistics. Liang Yonggang (2010) believes that conversion of metaphor to sense is an effective method for the translation of political metaphors, which is exemplified by the translation of political metaphors in the RWGs in the past ten years. He Mengyi (2011) posits that the conceptual metaphor can help to construct political ideology from the perspective of frame theory, which is based on President Obama's speech about the Libya War delivered at the US National Defense University in Washington, DC. Yang Daliang & Zhao Xiangyun (2012) reveal different functions and types of political texts. Zhu Xiaoming & Zeng Guoxiu (2013) explicate the metaphorical model and translation strategies in political texts based on the parallel corpus of Chinese and English political texts. Wei Minggao & Yu Gaofeng (2018) analyze the strategies of translating metaphors based on the RWG 2016. Shu Na (2017) reveals the characteristics of the English translation of political texts. Most recently, Hu Zhuanglin (2019) systematically expounds the methods and theories of metaphor translation.

In the West, the systematic study of metaphor can be traced back to Aristotle. He opines that "*the greatest by far is to be a master of metaphor*," and that the main function of metaphor is modification (Aristotle, 1954). Then many theories of metaphor were proposed, such as the substitution theory and the interaction theory. When Lakoff & Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* was published, scholars began to pay attention to this special linguistic phenomenon and the study of metaphor became a hot topic, which Johnson called a "metaphoriana". Since the 1970s,

metaphor has been studied from various perspectives, including cognitive psychology, philosophy, pragmatics, semiotics, phenomenology and hermeneutics. In recent years, Andreas Musolff (2006) explicates the metaphor scenarios in public discourse, based on examples from a bilingual corpus of British and German public debates. Anjuman Antil and Harsh Verma (2020) reveals the role and usage of metaphors in political communication in Indian politics. But few papers discuss the strategies of metaphor translation in politics. This study discusses the translation strategies of metaphors in political texts based on the RWG 2020, aiming to provide references for the translation of political texts, so as to convey the meaning of political texts faithfully and accurately.

3. Translation Strategies of Metaphors in the RWG 2020

Metaphor translation is a process of cross-cultural communication. Traditionally, there are three translation strategies of metaphors: literal translation, substitution and free translation (Hu, 2019). The RWG 2020 is a typical political text, in which metaphors are widely used. Taking the RWG 2020 as the research object, the authors discussed the translation strategies of metaphors. Followings are examples from the bilingual version of the RWG 2020.

3.1 Literal Translation

Ex. 1: 中华儿女风雨同舟、守望相助，筑起了抗击疫情的巍峨长城。

Through all these efforts, we, all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation, have stood together in the most trying of times and built a Great Wall of solidarity against the epidemic. The "Great Wall" is a typical symbol of China. It is the indestructible wall used to fight against the enemy's invasion, but here it refers to all Chinese standing together against the COVID-19. As the image of the "Great Wall" remains in the translation, literal translation is used here.

Ex. 2: 压实“米袋子”省长负责制和“菜篮子”市长负责制。

We will fully implement the system of provincial governors assuming responsibility for the "rice bag" and city mayors for the "vegetable basket."

“米袋子” literally means the "rice bag", here it refers to the food security. “菜篮子” literally means the "vegetable basket", which refers to the vegetable safety. Although literal translation is used, the use of quotation marks gives each term a special meaning. The images of "rice bag" and "vegetable basket" remain; thus, the method of literal translation is used here.

Ex. 3: 海外侨胞是祖国的牵挂，是联通世界的重要桥梁。

China cares deeply about our overseas nationals, who serve as a crucial bridge linking China and the rest of the world.

“桥梁” is a bridge, which is the connection of two sides. In modern Chinese, it is widely used to refer to the link between two things. It is so common that people can easily understand it. So it is translated into a “bridge”. The image of "bridge" remains; thus, literal translation is used here.

Ex. 4: 完善国防动员体系，始终让军政军民团结坚如磐石。

We will improve the system of national defense mobilization and ensure that the unity between the military and the government and between the military and the people remains rock solid.

“坚如磐石” is a Chinese idiom, which means something is as strong as a big stone or rock. We all know the rock is solid and indestructible. In "the people remains rock solid", the image of "rock" remains, and the method of literal translation is used here.

3.2 Substitution

Ex. 5: 各级政府必须真正过紧日子。

Governments at all levels must truly tighten their belt.

“紧” means tight, but life cannot be tightened. In the translation, "their belt" is added, and "tighten their belt" suggests eating less to save food. So it means to be economical. Here, the method of substitution is adopted.

3.3 Free Translation

Ex. 6: 为基层松绑减负。

To ensure that people working at the primary level are free from unnecessary restrictions and excessive burdens.

“松绑减负” means if something or someone was fastened, you should untie the rope and help him to get free. But here “基层” (the primary level) cannot be unfastened; “松绑减负” actually refers to "free from unnecessary restrictions and excessive burdens". Free translation is adopted here.

Ex. 7: 现行标准下农村贫困人口全部脱贫、贫困县全部摘帽。

Elimination of poverty among all rural residents living below the current poverty line and in all poor counties.

“摘帽” means "taking off the hat from someone's head". Here poverty is compared to a hat on people's head. In translation, the image of hat is deleted, and the translation of "elimination of poverty" shows that the metaphor is missing; thus, free translation is used here.

Ex. 8: 一定要把每一笔钱都用在刀刃上、紧要处。

We will see that every cent is used where it is needed most.

This sentence literally means we will spend money "on the edge of a knife". Obviously, it cannot make sense in English. But in the Chinese sentence, the metaphor is used, and "the edge of a knife" refers to a critical situation. In the translation "every cent is used where it is needed most", free translation is used.

Ex. 9: 强化阶段性政策，与制度性安排相结合，放水养鱼，助力市场主体纾困发展。

We will aggressively implement current policies in conjunction with institutional arrangements to create a more enabling environment and help market entities overcome difficulties and achieve development.

“放水养鱼” literally means “to release water to raise fish”. In our cognition, we know that fish cannot live without water, which is the enabling environment of fish living. Here “water” refers to the policies and “fish” refers to the companies, which means that the government will implement more policies to help the companies. In the translation, the images of “water” and “fish” are missing, while “enabling environment” is used. Here, the method of free translation is adopted.

Ex. 10: 要坚决把减税降费政策落到企业，留得青山，赢得未来。

All tax and fee reduction policies must be fully implemented for our businesses, so that they can sustain themselves and assure success for the future.

“青山” refers to “the green mountains,” but here they are not real mountains. Mountains are the basis for some people's survival, also referring to hope and future. In the translation, the image of mountains is missing, and “they can sustain themselves and assure success for the future” show that the metaphor is missing. Thus, free translation is used here.

Ex. 11: 实行重点项目攻关“揭榜挂帅”，谁能干就让谁干。

We will introduce an open competition mechanism to select the best candidates to lead key research projects.

“榜” refers to a list of recruitment or bidding, and “揭榜” means to face the challenge, while “挂帅” is to be the top manager or general of a certain social group. “揭榜挂帅” means to select the best leader. In the translation, the complex images are deleted. Free translation is used here.

Ex. 12: 要优选项目，不留后遗症，让投资持续发挥效益。

We will ensure that projects are up to standard, so they do not create any undesired consequences and the investments made deliver long-term returns.

“后遗症” is a concept in medicine, which refers to a defect or functional disorder of a tissue or organ left over after the patient has basically recovered. In modern Chinese, it also means that something has not been handled properly, leaving some problems behind. Here it is translated into “undesired consequences”. Free translation is adopted.

Since English and Chinese belong to two different language systems, there is a big difference between them. English and Chinese have their own characteristics in expression, so there are very few metaphors that are the same or similar. Literal translation and substitution can be used when there is the same or a similar metaphor in the target language. This is why the use of free translation is more frequent than those of literal translation and substitution in the above examples. Using literal translation to translate complex metaphors will increase the target readers' difficulty in understanding, so in many examples, free translation is more appropriate.

4. Conclusion

From the examples above, we can draw the following conclusions: 1) If a metaphor is common and easy to be understood, literal translation can be used to retain it. 2) If a metaphor is uncommon and difficult to be understood, the metaphor should be deleted, and free translation

can be used to clearly convey the meaning. 3) If there is a similar metaphor in the target language, and the target reader can easily understand it, the method of substitution can be adopted. In fact, metaphors in political texts not only explain the target domain, but also play an important role in shaping ideology. When translating political texts, translators should select appropriate translation strategies according to the types and functions of metaphors. Translators must fully understand the metaphors in the source language and make a comparison in order to achieve the purpose of communication. Translators should be familiar with the cultural differences and the characteristics in different languages, and adopt proper strategies to faithfully and accurately convey the meaning of political texts. With the deepening of internationalization, China's communication with the outside world is becoming more and more important. The voice of China can be heard by more and more people. The translation of metaphors in political texts deserves more attention. The authors hope to provide references for the translation of political texts, so as to improve the effectiveness of publicity and promote the construction of national discourse.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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